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REVOLT AGAINST SILENCE: THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ROMANIA

(An Update)

Prepared by the Staff

OF THE

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. . . . Not only are basic human rights disregarded in Romania, but even the institutions that are supposed to defend them -- the judiciary and the press -- have become instruments of intimidation and terror against the population. That's the cause of the silent revolt in the streets, the apathy of this southern people....

Romanian poet Mircea Dinescu
March 1989[1]

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[1]Mircea Dinescu, "Le desespoir de la caserne Ceausescu," Liberation, March 17, 1989, translated and reprinted in Uncaptive Minds, Vol. II, No. 3 (7) (May-July 1989), p. 33.

Letter of Transmittal

Patterns of repression in Romania remain sadly the same year after year. The Romanian regime has kept up pressure on members of religious and national minorities, as well as on all who have sought to express themselves freely. It has harassed and punished would-be emigrants by removing them from jobs and housing. It has exiled writers, philosophers and former leaders. It has jailed those who have sought the means to worship freely, and used psychiatric incarceration to punish free expression.

The regime has steadily curtailed the opportunities for members of ethnic minorities to maintain and cultivate their cultural heritage, cutting minority-language instruction and publishing to a minimum. Minority cultural and family ties have also been strictly limited. The regime has used violence and threats of violence to discourage citizens from seeking to exercise their rights. Many Romanian dissidents inside and outside the country have received black-bordered death threats, widely believed to be a favorite calling-card of Romania's notorious Securitate (secret police).

Increasingly, the regime's persecution has touched all Romanian citizens, who suffer from severe, state-imposed food shortages and the threat of displacement through the sistematizare, or systematization, program.[2] Despite the Romanian Government's March announcement, with great fanfare, that it had repaid the country's foreign debt, there is no sign that the regime will reorder its fiscal priorities in favor of consumption. Rationing continues unabated, while construction of new industrial projects seems to be moving forward with redoubled speed.

Poet Mircea Dinescu pointed up the contradictions of life in Romania in a March 1989 interview with the French newspaper Liberation:

> It's an absurd land where the border guards point their weapons towards their own country, where wheat is harvested on television but rots in the fields, where workers are called "proprietors" so that they can be made to buy what the Constitution says is rightfully theirs: their means of livelihood. Streetcar conductors are obliged to buy their streetcars, drillers must buy their drills, and peasants have to purchase the porches in their own yards . . . .[3]

Romania is a country saddled with over-regulation on the one hand, and riddled with corruption on the other. Its citizens thus are forced to compromise and break rules on a daily basis to feed themselves and their children, and to obtain basic services. But the police keep track of infractions, and consequently have an easy lever to pull anytime they want to bring pressure to bear on a citizen. Human rights activists are not charged with distributing manifestoes; instead they are accused of trafficking in coffee or spying for a foreign power. The Comanesti Baptists, whose case is detailed later in this report, were not tried for building a church, but for using what were termed "stolen" materials.

Few speak of any hope for the future, even after President Ceausescu is gone. At most, Romanian citizens expect that the next regime might be able to raise the standard of living quickly by redirecting some food from export to domestic consumption and abandoning some of Ceausescu's most irrational "prestige" projects (e.g., canals that will never be used). Many are well aware of the healing this country and its people will require after the present regime's sustained attack on every

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[2]See Chapter One, "The Systematization Program," for a description.

[3]Dinescu, op. cit., p. 34.

vestige of community, from ethnic group to religious congregation to family.

Romania's repressive domestic policies are mirrored in its cynical approach to the international commitments it has undertaken. In January, the regime gave its agreement to the Vienna Concluding Document, then announced that it would abide only by those commitments it did not find objectionable. It rejected the U.N. Human Rights Commission Resolution passed in March calling for appointment of a Special Rapporteur to investigate Romania's human rights performance and has spurned the attempts of seven participating CSCE States to use the new human dimension "mechanism" to address several human rights cases. In the face of criticism at two recent meetings held under the aegis of the 35-country Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, in London and in Paris, Romania has returned to the time-worn and untenable defense of its abysmal record by claiming that "outsiders" have no right to "interfere" in a sovereign country's internal affairs.

These patterns are not new, even if the particulars change from year to year. They represent the weary attempts of a discredited regime to cope with a recent development that is new in Romania: a stream of increasingly vocal, articulate and popular dissent is coursing through the country. What seemed a lone writer's pipe-dream only a year ago -- that his open letter of protest would be followed by a stream of others -- suddenly, against all odds, is emerging as a reality in Romania. An opposition consensus is taking shape, and the regime finds that shooting down ideas takes more than its customary sniping at a few isolated intellectuals.

Representatives of Romania's political and cultural elites are calling for an end to silence. Silence, they say, has made them accomplices in the crimes against their country.

There is no end in sight to repression in Romania, nor are there prospects at present for the ascendance of reform ideas at the top echelons of the state. But we can take heart that some Romanians have found their voices, and are fighting hard for their rights. To paraphrase courageous human rights activist Doina Cornea, to reduce a nation to silence is a crime against the spirit -- a crime we cannot let come to pass.

STENY H. HOYER
Co-Chairman

DENNIS DeCONCINI
Chairman

November 1989

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I. THE SYSTEMATIZATION PROGRAM

Perhaps no policy better reflects the Romanian regime's contemptuous attitude toward human rights and humanitarian values than the program of sistematizare, or systematization. By the same token, no official Romanian program has provoked such a sustained outcry of protest from all sectors of Romanian society, as well as from the world outside.

People seem to be the last priority in this "nightmare world," as U.N. rapporteur Dumitru Mazilu has described it, where

> ...newly born babies are denied registration for the first three to four weeks, while old people are refused aid in case of need if they have reached the age of 60, and while medicine is out of the question altogether.[4]

If such a cavalier approach to human life is the norm throughout Romania -- as many observers have confirmed -- it is even more apparent in the approximately 7,000 villages slated for disappearance, either through demolition or attrition.

The program leapt into the public eye in spring 1988, when President Ceausescu announced his intention to raze about half of Romania's almost 13,000 villages and reconstruct others into "agro-industrial centers." The idea was not new; it had been written into Communist Party directives in a less drastic form in 1972 and into law in 1974. At that time, about 3,000 villages were slated to die out gradually, while 300 to 400 villages were to be transformed into larger towns. But Ceausescu's industrial construction priorities overshadowed the rural reconstruction and resettlement program, and that program was not pursued with any vigor.

By spring 1988, the rural systematization program once again had emerged as a top priority on Ceausescu's agenda, and he announced that the program would be completed by the turn of the century. The Romanian press has outlined official plans little by little; central and local officials have offered varying accounts as to how the program will be realized, or even if it will be carried out according to Ceausescu's drastic conception. Recent official pronouncements indicate that the regime is conscious that it cannot fully implement the program in the time frame originally indicated; whether the program subsequently will be scaled back remains an open question.

Nevertheless, this past spring the Romanian press carried a series of reports on newly-developing "agro-industrial towns," as well as telegrams of "thanks" from local citizens and officials.

The scarcity of reliable information about future developments has only increased the rural population's uncertainty over its future. Most information about the program that finds its way to citizens is on the level of rumors. In some cases, such as that of Harman, near Brasov, residents learned of demolition plans only when surveyors appeared to plan new buildings on the site of their homes. That demolition was expected to commence this fall.

While the grave threat systematization poses to Romania's cultural legacy has been the focus of much of the criticism of the project both abroad and in Romania,

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[4]Report on Human Rights and Youth prepared by Mr. Dumitru Mazilu, Special Rapporteur, United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1989/41, 10 July 1989, p. 4.

clearly the economic repercussions are just as pressing. The countryside has remained an essential supplemental food source, not only for Romania's rural population, but also for its urban inhabitants. As the systematization program goes forward, Romanians' self-sufficiency will be further eroded as a result of Ceausescu's moves to gain greater control over agricultural production, and claim the products for the state.

Reportedly, the systematization program has encountered resistance from both villagers, who resist being moved (and being forced either to pay for authorities to demolish their homes, or demolish the homes themselves) and local authorities. Local revolts against systematization have been reported in the village of Petrova in Maramures County, and the villages of Parva and Monor in Bistrita-Nisaud County. These revolts are said to take the form of threats against local officials. In other cases, officials have refused to carry out orders. The Hungarian Press of Transylvania has reported one such example involving the authorities' attempts to designate some villages to be merely streets, and then destroy them:

> . . . Officials pressured the director of the Csikszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) County Savings Bank to convince the inhabitants of his native village of Palfalva (Pauleni) to request that their village be designated a street of the nearby town of Csikszepviz (Frumoasa). Local Party officials summoned the bank director with the intent to terrorize him, but instead of responding to the summons, he resigned all of his posts to protest these tactics and the village-razing plan.[5]

Evidence of extensive demolition of villages still is not easily visible outside of the Bucharest-Snagov corridor (the road to Ceausescu's weekend villa, thus in the direct line of fire) where several villages went down last fall. Many villagers seem to think that the immediate danger has passed, and that their villages instead will be denied services like transportation, utilities and supplies, and ultimately will die off. One village in Covasna County visited in mid-September by Helsinki Commission staff had not seen a supply truck since early August, confirming that gradual depopulation due to lack of services may indeed replace wholesale demolition of villages.

If systematization still has not touched many villages, it has hit virtually every town of any size with a vengeance. Bucharest, gutted and slashed by new boulevards, studded with bare and ungainly highrises, has provided the model for the rest of the country's systematization. With their four- and five-story apartment walkups built in the once-distinctive historic centers, Romanian towns are beginning to look identical.

Historian Dinu Giurescu has testified that at least 29 Romanian towns have already been 85 to 90 percent demolished and rebuilt according to the systematization plan, and that at least 37 more towns are in the throes of systematization.[6]

Miercurea Ciuc is one of those 37 towns. Located in Harghita County in the rolling foothills of Eastern Transylvania, Miercurea Ciuc is a stately county seat of shaded, well-maintained villas and ornate public buildings dating largely from the last century. But it is being transformed in concentric circles from its core, now a flat concrete plaza surrounded by a modern municipal building, shops and a cultural center. In the absence of benches, plantings, or any other amenities to draw people, the plaza is more fit for staged "patriotic" demonstrations and parades than the strolling and conversation that fills old town squares.

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[5]Hungarian Press of Transylvania, Release No. 14, 1989 (Feb. 26, 1989).

[6]Dinu Giurescu, The Razing of Romania's Past (New York, 1989), p. 67.

Cranes loom over all sides of the square, designating by their positions the latest circle of demolition. Before them stand five-story, standard-issue apartment buildings. Behind them, through dust clouds, the old neighborhoods peek through. They will be the next sacrifices to Ceausescu's obsession to bring Romania into the twentieth century, and simultaneously cut its history at the roots.

II. THE DISSENTERS

Over the past year, Romanian dissenters have moved from lamenting the inaction of their colleagues and themselves to trying to force a public dialogue with the regime. Whereas last November a Bucharest dissident explained ruefully that "a very large number of Romanian intellectuals don't do anything because they can't," the intervening months have shown that they can in reality have an effect simply by speaking out. Their open letters and appeals, peaking in volume in March, have lent vital moral support to the Romanian population. The authorities have reacted quickly to isolate and intimidate dissenters, but their messages have remained and found resonance in a population hungry for meaning. For the present, however, protest outside of intellectual and dissident circles has been confined largely to guarded grumbling.

Several reasons for the early spring's sudden burst of dissent from many quarters come to mind. First, the regime's renewed pursuit of the systematization program, with its potentially drastic cultural and economic consequences, forced many otherwise quiescent citizens to protest. Dissenter Doina Cornea's eloquent open letter of August 1988 on this subject, co-signed by 29 others, was only the first of what would grow into a stream of appeals to stop the program. Virtually every subsequent protest letter, no matter what its focus, has included a condemnation of systematization as an assault against the Romanian nation and the minorities.

Second, early this year, the Bucharest rumor mill began to pick up consistent but unsubstantiated signals that some crisis was taking place at the top echelons of power. Ceausescu was said to be seriously ill. Talk of a critical letter by Communist Party members also surfaced repeatedly. Around January 26, Ceausescu's birthday -- a time when the President's image is even more omnipresent than usual -- numerous small acts of arson and other signs of protest were reported in excited whispers.

In January, police arrested two journalists from the daily Romania Libera, Petre Mihai Bacanu and Anton Uncu, and one from Romania Pitoreasca magazine, Mihai Creanga, as well as a Romania Libera typesetter, Alexandru Chivoiu. The four were accused of preparing an anti-Ceausescu manifesto for distribution on or around the President's birthday. They remained in detention for several months, where they were treated brutally, and one, Bacanu, remains in prison. He reportedly was sentenced to six years in prison on non-political charges of illegal trading in automobiles, coffee and other goods. The other three have been sent into internal exile. Later in the spring, three more journalists from Romania Libera -- Dorel Dorian, Ion Stoica and Tea Serbanescu -- were arrested for allegedly sympathizing with their imprisoned colleagues.

The February-March meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, with its anticipated condemnation of Romania, focused worldwide attention on Romania. This, in combination with the signals from inside the country, may have suggested that it was a propitious time for dissenting voices to make themselves heard.

The first letters had a snowball effect. More dissenters joined the chorus, raising their concerns about repression of the first letter-writers, as well as about other human rights-related developments in Romania.

Two of the first letters to appear were dated March 3. Both were addressed to Ceausescu, and both came from writers who had never wanted to be causes celebres.

One letter came from 62-year-old writer Dan Desliu, who had resigned from the party in 1980 and refrained from publishing his work for eight years, by his own choice. "I no longer publish, believing a serious writer cannot offer only pages

without a direct connection to the sad reality of life in Romania today," he explained. In his letter, he traced the evolution of his attitude toward the Romanian Communist Party, which he was "proud to join" at the end of World War II but which had by now been taken over by a "nepotistic dictatorship." In a reflection of Ceausescu's extraordinarily personalized rule and the terror upon which he depends to stay in power, he protested,

> You have put everyone under the rule of fear. You have succeeded in putting terror in everyone, yet you want to maintain the right to be the most loved. Impossible; fear and love do not go together.[7]

Desliu was interrogated for 10 hours after he granted an interview to the Voice of America in mid-March. Placed immediately under house arrest, he faced charges of "illegal trafficking in coffee." On March 17, he began a hunger-strike. Desliu was then forcibly committed to a Bucharest psychiatric hospital, where he was reportedly force-fed. In May, he returned home, where he remains under close surveillance.

Popular poet Ana Blandiana authored the other letter of March 3, on the six-month anniversary of her prohibition from publishing. Like Desliu, she had tried to be true to her profession, but had continued writing as long as she could, and wished to continue writing. She wrote to Ceausescu,

> Even now I have no wish to become a "case," equally I have no wish to be a victim contributing, by her own silence, to the silence that isolates her; I wish to be nothing more nor less than a writer. . . .[8]

Blandiana remains banned from publishing.

Ten days after Blandiana and Desliu wrote their letters to Ceausescu, poet Mircea Dinescu wrote an open letter to Writers' Union president Dumitru Radu Popescu protesting against the continual censorship of Romanian writers. The next day, he was expelled from the Communist Party and fired from the editorial staff of Romania Literara. He was criticized for "participating without approval at receptions given by foreign embassies" and for "accepting visits from journalists, writers, and diplomats from capitalist and socialist countries."

During a trip to the Soviet Union in late 1988, Dinescu had granted journalists an interview in which he praised the Soviet policies of perestroika and glasnost. When he returned to Romania, he was placed under surveillance. Authorities refused permission for the publication of his latest manuscript for a collection of poetry, claiming that some of the poems contained "slanderous" material.

On March 17, the French newspaper Liberation published an interview in which Dinescu presented a scathing analysis of the Romanian situation. In the interview, he posed the same question troubling other independent-minded intellectuals:

> Why are our writers and artists remaining silent? Because your friends tell you things like: 'Be careful not to get run over by a car!' 'Remember that you have children!' 'Take care not to get yourself expelled!' whenever you suggest sending the authorities, say, a simple memorandum on the disastrous

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[7]Dan Desliu, unpublished letter, March 1989.

[8]Ana Blandiana, "The Most Famous Tomcat in Town: How One of Romania's Best Poets Was Banned for Publishing a Children's Poem About a Cat," Index on Censorship, Vol. 18., No. 8 (September 1989), p. 34.

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> cultural situation here. When one of our venerable writers, the author of enviably popular novels, was invited to sign such a memorandum, he was deeply moved and replied: 'I would have signed it with all my heart, but I'm afraid that at my age I wouldn't survive the rough treatment in the police station basements.'[9]

On the day the interview was published, Dinescu was placed under house arrest, where he remained for a few months. Authorities threatened to move him out of Bucharest, but he steadfastly refused to go.

Dinescu described his house arrest in another letter to the Writers' Union president:

> Since the 17th of April, my home has been under surveillance by plainclothesmen 24 hours a day. Not only foreigners but also Romanian colleagues are stopped from visiting me, and I am forbidden, in my turn, from entering private homes. Since the same day, my telephone service has been interrupted and postal service suspended, with a single exception -- a vulgar and anonymous death-threat.
>
> As if my improper exclusion from the Party and from the editorship of Romania Literara and cutting me off from a means of existence were not enough, my wife, a translator by profession, was forbidden her livelihood, when the book of Boris Pasternak's prose to be published by Universe Publishing House was stopped. . . .
>
> What secret tribunal decided that I no longer have the right to speak even with my best friends?[10]

Seven prominent writers and editors who wrote a letter of support for Dinescu on March 20 -- Geo Bogza, Stefan Augustin Doinas, Dan Haulica, Alexandru Paleologu, Andrei Plesu, Octavian Paler and Mihai Sora -- were banned from publishing.

The publication bans, a liberally applied form of punishment in Romania, have had a chilling effect on Romanian intellectuals. In September, Mircea Iorgulescu, UNESCO representative, literary critic, editor of Romania Literara and a member of the Writers' Union board, requested asylum in France. Iorgulescu reported that he had been under surveillance after police uncovered a meeting of intellectuals planning a coordinated protest against government policies.

In an interview with the Voice of America, Iorgulescu pointed to another, more telling reason for his decision to defect. When he was on home leave in Romania in March, he visited the Writers' Union, where he ran into Stefan Augustin Doinas. As he looked at his now-banned colleague, he wondered what professional future he could possibly have in a country where the best writers cannot publish. What would he be able to write?

The most spectacular sign of dissent to appear in Romania in years also came to light in early March. Six prominent, veteran members of the Romanian Communist Party -- Silviu Brucan, Constantin Pirvulescu, Corneliu Manescu, Alexandru Birladeanu, Gheorghe Apostol and Ion Raceanu -- sent a blunt, open letter to President Ceausescu criticizing the destruction of the country his policies have caused and calling for an

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[9]Dinescu, op. cit., p. 34.

[10]Mircea Dinescu, unpublished letter, June 1989.

immediate renunciation of the systematization program, restoration of constitutional guarantees on civil rights ("This will enable you to observe the decisions of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights," they wrote), and an end to food exports "which are threatening the biological existence of our nation." "You must admit, Mr. President, that a society cannot function if the authorities, starting from the top, show disrespect for the law," they wrote.[11]

At first the authorities seemed to exhibit confusion as to how they should respond to this unprecedented challenge from the former elite ranks of the Communist Party. Only Silviu Brucan had previously been involved in dissident activity. Another, 94-year-old Constantin Pirvulescu, was famed for his call at a 1979 party Congress for Ceausescu to step down. The regime settled on a strategy of isolating the signatories to the greatest extent possible, humiliating them, and striking out at some of their relatives.

On March 14, the regime announced that espionage and treason charges were being leveled against Mircea Raceanu, a diplomat and the stepson of one of the six signatories. The younger Raceanu had been arrested on January 31, when he was reportedly caught attempting to pass a copy of the signatories' letter to a Western diplomat. Conflicting reports about his fate have surfaced over the intervening months; the only concrete message to come from the top echelons of power in Romania was President Ceausescu's remark in August that Raceanu had "personally betrayed" him but that he would not be sentenced to death for his "betrayal." Mass meetings at workplaces denouncing the "traitor" were staged with lightning speed in mid-March.

Initially, Brucan was picked up twice for overnight questioning. Then, in quick order, the telephone lines of the signatories were cut, and visitors to their homes were firmly turned away; party activists tried in vain to persuade the signatories to renounce the letter; Brucan's son-in-law was fired from his job; and the six were moved out of their homes and sent to the outskirts of Bucharest. All reportedly have been denied medical care, and their future remains very uncertain. In an August interview with Newsweek, Ceausescu referred to the six as "agents" of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union.

This summer saw evidence of more stirrings in the Romanian Communist Party. In June, a previously unknown, self-described fraction of the Communist Party, the Front of National Salvation, wrote a letter criticizing the dismal situation in Romania. The letter described the economic "chaos" in the country, the "permanent humiliation" to which citizens are subjected, and the sad state of the party, in which party organizations have a purely formal existence, serving only to "approve unanimously decisions . . . already established" without debate. Echoing other dissenters, the letter noted, "After years of silence the time has come to express the dissatisfaction of the masses."

The Front also issued an appeal along the same lines to the party in preparation for the Fourteenth Party Congress, scheduled for November 1989. It explained that Romania had reached a critical impasse, when the party must choose between far-reaching changes or uncontrollable unrest in the country:

> We believe that this occasion is perhaps the last time when it will still be possible to act wisely and peacefully in order to effect immediately the essential changes that the present state of crisis requires.

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[11]The letter was reprinted in William Pfaff, "Romania: Breaking the Silence," New York Review of Books, April 27, 1989.

> It is perhaps the last chance to avoid . . . the bloodbath to which despair almost always leads.

In the "twelfth hour of this historical impasse," the appeal called on the party not to reelect Ceausescu, as party veteran Pirvulescu had demanded at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1979. This time, the authors of the appeal urged, "the lone voice should become the collective voice of the present." The party should take as a starting point for its decisions the critiques of the six party veterans, Doina Cornea, Dan Desliu and Mircea Dinescu, who together had become the "mouthpiece" of the people. At the Congress, the party should bring political, economic and social realities to light. Then, having analyzed these in full, it could decide on a new direction for the party and the country, without Ceausescu at the helm.

Other dissenters who had been active before the last year continued the cycle of speaking out, being isolated and punished. Most prominent among them is former Cluj University Professor Doina Cornea, the author of successive appeals to Ceausescu. In May, Belgian parliamentarian and European Parliament member Gerard Dupre was beaten by a gang of 10 to 15 plainclothesmen when he attempted to visit Cornea. Cornea herself was beaten that day, kicked and threatened with death by her attackers. She sustained numerous deep bruises and open bleeding. Cornea remains the object of deep public admiration, symbolized most poignantly by the scrawled graffiti message glimpsed behind a thin mask of whitewash on a Cluj wall in September: "Long live Doina Cornea!"

Biophysicist Gabriel Andreescu has been threatened since last fall with charges of high treason for exercising his right to free expression by writing critical appeals and analyses of the Romania situation. He engaged in a 15-day hunger strike in May and June 1989 to coincide with the opening of the Paris Meeting of the CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension and to call attention to the abuse of human rights in Romania, the Government's willful equation of a critical spirit with treason, the xenophobia of Romanian policies and the maltreatment of all Romanians who have attempted to speak out. Recently he has been threatened with psychiatric incarceration. His whereabouts and condition are unknown; a CSCE staff member who sought to visit him at his apartment was turned away by a plainclothes policeman who suggested that any inquiries regarding Romanian citizens should be presented to the Foreign Ministry.

Romanian authorities detained or sent out of Bucharest a number of dissenters during the Warsaw Pact summit there this past July in order to prevent contact with visiting Western journalists. Police pointedly reminded many of the existence of still-unpublished Decree 408, which is variously reported to require Romanian citizens to report all contacts with foreigners to police within 24 hours, or not to have any such contacts whatsoever. Dissident engineer Nicu Stancescu reportedly was detained on July 1, but had carefully prepared a press statement in advance of his detention. His present whereabouts and condition are not known. Mariana Celac-Botez was sent out of the city altogether until the meeting was over.

The spate of defections of high-ranking, privileged members of the Romanian leadership over the past year signals the hopelessness that has gripped the country. In December 1988, Ionita Olteanu, editor-in-chief of Revista Economica, defected after being sent to Munich to defend the systematization policy. Olteanu was said to have held a rare, unrestricted passport which allowed him to spend much time abroad. The act of defection was not nearly as striking as the person who did it: a trusted spokesman for the Romanian regime.

The Romanian regime sustained further embarrassment this past summer when U.N. Special Rapporteur Dumitru Mazilu slipped a damning critique of the Romanian human rights situation out of the country, where it has received wide publicity.[12]

The Romanian Government appointed Mazilu to the U.N. Human Rights Subcommittee in 1984. The following year, the Subcommittee requested that Mazilu prepare a report on the human rights of youth for presentation at its 39th session in August 1986. That session was postponed until 1987, but Mazilu failed to submit his report. The U.N. Secretary-General invited Mazilu to Geneva, but Mazilu reported that the Romanian Government would not permit him to leave the country. Romanian authorities first claimed that Mazilu was ill, then elaborated that he "lack(ed) the intellectual capacity" to author the requested report. Most recently, a Romanian official characterized Mazilu as a "citizen whose presence abroad would harm the interests of the Romanian state."

In early 1988 Mazilu sent out a first draft of his report, and was subsequently placed under house arrest. Nevertheless, he managed to send out a final version of his report this summer.

Like the critiques of many one-time members of Romania's inner political circles, Mazilu's analysis centers on President Ceausescu's dictatorial style of rule and the consequent damage to the country. "Great personalities have been reduced to silence," he wrote. "The only voice that can be heard is that of the leader."[13]

Mazilu, too, treated the theme of the Romanians' seeming passivity, writing that

> . . . the struggle for survival keeps more and more individuals away from political and social disturbances. . . . If we add to hunger and cold the fear generated by merciless systems of repression . . . we shall have a fairly complete picture of the inhuman means of government used by tyrants who are increasingly distinguished by their violent offensive against inherent human rights and freedoms. . . . Distrust of friends, colleagues and even relatives grows day by day.[14]

Mazilu's wife was reported to have lost her job after a West German newspaper reported the existence of Mazilu's report. Mazilu himself remains isolated and under house arrest (his telephone has been taken out of service), with a heavy police presence on the street outside his residence. In a letter to the United Nations this summer, Mazilu reported that policemen charged with following him and his family had threatened to kill him, and that he had received letters to the same effect.

Evidence of the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes has resurfaced in Romania in recent years. The Commission has learned of several cases of psychiatric incarceration, as well as the use of threats against dissenters who are warned that if they continue to speak out, they will be interned in a psychiatric hospital.

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[12]See Mazilu, op. cit.

[13]Mazilu, op. cit., p. 11.

[14]Ibid, pp. 12-13.

The best-known current psychiatric case in Romania is that of Nestor Corneliu Popescu, a Baptist and film-maker from Bucharest. Popescu was interned in a psychiatric hospital in Poiana Mare in November 1987 after attempting in August to deliver to a Western Embassy in Bucharest an appeal to Romanian intellectuals to take responsibility for the state of their country. He was arrested and charged falsely with disturbing the public order and hitting an employee of the Embassy.

After the initial six months of hospitalization, a commission of doctors found Popescu mentally fit, but a tribunal in July subsequently refused his request for discharge. In August, another tribunal ordered Popescu's release from the hospital, but three days later his wife was informed that his appeal had been rejected.[15]

Information has come to light recently concerning a couple forced into a Bucharest psychiatric hospital for over a month in early 1987 "at the request of the militia" to be treated for "anti-social acts." The hospitalization took place just prior to Soviet leader Gorbachev's visit to Bucharest, and the couple was released several days after his departure. The husband said he had survived only thanks to doctors who advised him not to take the prescribed medication, the effects of which he witnessed in other patients: lethargy, disorientation, extreme personality disorders and, in some cases, death.

The number of political prisoners currently incarcerated in Romania is unknown, but could range in the hundreds. These prisoners include individuals who have protested the authorities' denial of permission for them to leave the country. They also include people who have attempted to leave Romania without following the officially decreed and very arduous emigration procedures.

A list of currently incarcerated prisoners of conscience known by name to the Helsinki Commission follows:

Petre Bacanu -- journalist for Romania Libera, sentenced to three years in prison for preparing an anti-regime pamphlet, reportedly in solitary confinement;

Daniel Baias -- 21 years old, imprisoned in February 1989 after fleeing to Yugoslavia and being forcibly returned to Romania; from Cluj;

Ion Bugan -- sentenced to 10 years in prison for "hostile propaganda," reportedly in solitary confinement;

Vasilica Buta -- architect, arrested upon being forcibly returned from Hungary in June 1988, where she was trying to flee for the second time, in Oradea Prison; from Bucharest;

Ion Draghici -- cybernetics engineer, 45 years old, arrested in 1983 for distributing leaflets calling on citizens to join a labor union, in Aiud Prison;

Gabriel Duma -- 18 years old, imprisoned in February 1989 after fleeing to Yugoslavia and being returned to Romania; from Gilau;

Ion Fistioc -- architect, jailed since July 1988 for attempting to exercise the right to free expression; from Bucharest;

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[15]The Commission has learned that Nestor Corneliu Popescu was discharged from the psychiatric hospital and put directly on a plane for the West on November 22. See Keston College News Release, 24 November 1989.

Lucian Iancu -- theater director, in Aiud Prison for attempting to flee Romania; from Constanta;

Dumitru Iuga -- television technician, arrested in 1984 for participating in a Bucharest student group supporting human rights;

Ion Gabriel Lazaroiu -- house painter, 31 years old, arrested in August 1988 while trying to cross into Yugoslavia, imprisoned in Timisoara, where he must work 12-hour days, in poor health; from Brasov;

Nicolae Litoiu -- locksmith, arrested in September 1981 and condemned for "propaganda" to a 15-year term;

Alexandru Mateescu -- helmsman, in Iasi Prison for attempting to flee Romania;

Mihai Pavelescu -- imprisoned since April 1988 for granting an interview to foreign journalists;

Dan Petrescu -- arrested in Iasi on the night of October 30 or 31, 1989, after publication and broadcast of interviews with him in Liberation, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, condition and whereabouts unknown[16];

Emilia Popescu -- sentenced in August 1988 to one year and four months in prison upon being forcibly returned from Hungary in May 1988 after spending one week there;

Nestor Corneliu Popescu -- interned in a psychiatric hospital in Poiana Mare since November 1987 after attempting in August 1987 to deliver an appeal to a Western Embassy in Bucharest[17];

Ionel Radu -- arrested after third attempt to flee the country, imprisoned in Timisoara Prison;

Valer Sabau -- arrested in 1988, reportedly in Satu Mare Prison, for distributing leaflets criticizing Ceausescu and other Communist Party leaders;

Florentin Scaletchi -- captain, in Galati Prison for attempting to flee Romania;

Adrian Staicu -- 34 years old, forcibly returned to Romania in May 1988 by Hungarian authorities after reaching Hungary on the fourth attempt, sentenced in August 1988 to one year and four months in prison;

Ion Tomteanu -- 31 years old, arrested upon being sent back to Romania after about two months in Yugoslav refugee camps; from Timisoara;

Vasile Totu -- 34 years old, driver, sentenced in 1983 to seven years in prison.

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[16]The Commission has learned that Petrescu was released from prison in early November.

[17]See Footnote 15.

III. THE WORKERS

Officials point proudly to the Romanian citizens' right to work as proof of the extent to which human rights are respected in Romania. Yet this so-called "right" is mandatory. The law on parasitism, used to justify criminal prosecution of the unemployed, is a powerful tool in the authorities' hands. With the much-vaunted "right" to work being in reality a requirement to be registered officially at some easily monitored workplace, any worker who does not follow his work placement orders risks imprisonment and other forms of punishment.

The regime relies upon compulsory military service both for defense and a source of labor. Refugees have testified that increasing numbers of young men now are being drafted directly into labor battalions, rather than into army units which are subsequently assigned to labor. (Troops have long been used to supplement workers during harvest time and in construction jobs.) The Hungarian Press of Transylvania has reported on one example of this practice:

> At the end of May when young people in Temesvar (Timisoara) reported for compulsory military service, authorities forced those applying for college entrance to sign a declaration that in case they do not get into college, they will accept three-year work assignments in the Motruba region coal mines.[18]

The Hungarian Press of Transylvania also reported that in September 1987, hundreds of native Transylvanian workers were fired from their jobs and sent to work at the Cernavoda nuclear power plant. Workers who did not accept the job would be prosecuted for "parasitism," they were told.[19]

Under the Global Accord system, workers continually receive pay cuts because of the combination of their enterprises' unrealistically high production plans and shortages of raw materials. Some workers have received as little as 30 percent of their regular paychecks, and at some factories, wages barely compensate workers for the cost of transportation to and from work. The workers' situation can only be expected to decline further, as President Ceausescu recently has called for a 50 percent increase in production without any commensurate increase in investment or material inputs.

Workers also are punished for not meeting production quotas by losing holidays. This past spring, Die Welt carried the account of electrician Emil Jancu Budac:

> "Because the plant personnel failed to meet the quota, the only nonworking Saturday in the month was dropped . . . . We drafted a written complaint. All workers signed it. Because I was the ring leader, I got a visit from the secret police and then I was transferred to a poultry farm. Everyday, I had to travel a distance of 30 km to work and repeatedly I only got a part of the specified wages -- with the explanation that the little roosters were always underweight. But the truth is that this was due to the fact that there was not enough protein in the fodder."

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[18]Hungarian Press of Transylvania, Release No. 58/1989 (July 9, 1989).

[19]Hungarian Press of Transylvania, Release No. 106/1987 (September 30, 1987).

Authorities have used dangerous or undesirable work to punish free-thinking workers. Romanian refugees have reported, for example, that they had been forced to work with hazardous chemicals when their bosses learned of their religious faith.

Worker-led uprisings such as the one in Brasov in November 1987 are rare. Workers tend more to effect small work stoppages, if they take any action at all, with very limited, concrete goals. In late 1988 a group of Cluj construction workers staged a short sitdown strike to protest against unexpected pay cuts. Management promised the workers to repay the wages due to them, and the strike ended. In May of this year, workers at a Cluj refrigerator factory began a work slowdown to protest the management's announcement that it would be able to pay only 75 percent of the workers' salaries. The slowdown lasted two days, until the Securitate threatened the participants with deportation if they did not return to work. The workers abruptly gave up on their demands and returned to their jobs.[20] A more recent reported strike action at the "Grivitsa Rossie" engineering works on the outskirts of Bucharest in August provoked an even more threatening response, as troops surrounded the factory. Neither the outcome nor other facts surrounding this strike action have emerged yet.

Amnesty International has reported that up to 60 workers involved in the Brasov uprising of November 1987 are believed to be serving sentences of up to three years of corrective labor, at reduced wages. Other participants were reported to have been fired or sent to work in salt mines. Still others are rumored simply to have "disappeared."

The authorities' rapid quashing of workers' disturbances has discouraged attempts at labor organizing in Romania. A group of former political prisoners who announced their formation of the independent Libertatea trade union in 1988 were beaten severely and harassed by police.

Recently, small but significant signs of solidarity between intellectuals and workers have emerged in Romania. This development is best symbolized by the signatures of several workers on some of dissident Doina Cornea's letters. On May 1, 1989, three workers -- Ioan Voicu, Bogdan Serban and Mihai Torja -- went to Cluj to meet with Doina Cornea, with whose open letter on systematization they had associated themselves in August 1988. The three were immediately arrested and held for three days, during which they were badly beaten.

[20]Hungarian Press of Transylvania, Release No. 36/1989 (May 12, 1989).

IV. THE BELIEVERS

On the surface, Romania could be mistaken for a comfortable place for religious believers. In some regions, fat onion domes and towering spires rise out of the countryside, and cemeteries are crowded with crosses and, occasionally, Stars of David. Road-side chapels and devotional statues greet drivers. On Sundays, throngs of believers crowd into incense-filled churches.

Yet true religious life in Romania blossoms precisely in spite of the best attempts of the authorities to drive religion out of the populace. It is confined to the catacombs, to apartments and homes, informal gatherings, and the unofficial hierarchies of trusted leaders. Where authorities seek to transform the practice of religion to a prescribed set of dry rituals, believers attempt to introduce religious values into their everyday lives. It was no accident that an unregistered Baptist pastor visited recently by a Helsinki Commission staffer chose the video "Quo Vadis" -- portraying the hardships of underground Christians in Roman times -- to be the "background noise" to deafen any listening devices that might be trained on his apartment.

While Romanian officials point proudly to the number of churches that are open and crowded with worshipers, authorities have maintained sustained pressure against the churches through administrative means (e.g., control over seminary admissions and church budgets), outright intimidation (e.g., beating of priests, professional demotions of believers), and vicious anti-religious press campaigns. The destruction of about 30 Orthodox churches in Bucharest, as well as this summer's beatings of elderly Orthodox priests, suggest that the Orthodox Church, once almost immune by virtue of its traditional non-activism, is itself under increasing and blatant pressure.

Article 30 of the Romanian Constitution theoretically guarantees Romanian citizens the freedom "to share or not to share a religious belief." However, the same article makes clear that religious groups will be regulated by the state. Each of the 14 officially-recognized religious denominations functions according to a state-approved charter. The Catholic Church, which lacks such a charter, enjoys the same formal relations with state authorities as other legal denominations.

The church enjoying the largest membership by far is the Romanian Orthodox Church, which includes 16 to 18 million of Romania's 23 million citizens as members. That church is exclusively ethnic Romanian. The Catholic Church is ethnically mixed, although the majority of its members are Hungarian (about 700,000 of 1.3 million, according the Vatican figures); many of its ethnic Romanian adherents are actually Eastern Rite Catholics whose denomination has been banned in Romania. The Neo-Protestant churches also are of mixed ethnic composition, although they appear to be predominantly Romanian. The Reformed, Unitarian and Presbyterian churches are exclusively Hungarian, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church is German. Romania's Jewish population has shrunken steadily through emigration to Israel, dipping to about 20,000 to 22,000 at present.

The small evangelical Protestant sects are the chief targets of harassment by Romanian authorities. Members of officially recognized denominations, including Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostalists, are as susceptible to official persecution as members of such banned denominations as Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Eastern Rite Catholics (Uniates) and Nazarenes, all of which are nonetheless active in Romania. Pentecostals, Evangelical Brethren and unofficial Baptists are perceived as a particular threat to the state because of their insistence on the primacy of religious belief over state authority in moral matters.

Pressure on religious believers is mounting in Romania. In summer 1989, Father Ion Ionasco of the Saint Nicolae Church was beaten to death. While Orthodox Church officials said that the priest had been killed during an attempted robbery, Orthodox prelates suggested they were not so certain of the circumstances, calling the murder a "delicate matter." Five other priests were reported to have been severely beaten this summer, some on more than one occasion, and some of their congregants felt strongly that the beatings constituted a strong message from authorities not to speak out. One priest, rumored to have criticized the demolition of Orthodox churches, felt certain that his two beatings were instigated by the authorities.

The state exerts the most pressure on prelates and believers through the administrative bodies that oversee religious activities, including the Department of Cults, and the various Church hierarchies. The Presidium of the Grand National Assembly approves all high church appointments. Church leaders are obligated to take an oath of loyalty to the state and to promise to oversee and vouch for their subordinates' behavior.

Rev. Laszlo Tokes has been struggling with the Hungarian Reformed hierarchy in Romania, itself under great pressure to keep its church in line, and has also been the recent target of violent threats and other forms of harassment. Reverend Tokes, the son of Rev. Istvan Tokes, a Cluj Reformed minister persecuted for his own defense of minority rights, has served his congregation in Timisoara since 1986, when he was fired from another pastoral post after nurturing a vibrant cultural and religious life for his congregation. In August 1988, after Tokes had repeatedly criticized the ever-lower admissions of students to theological faculties, the Hungarian Reformed Bishop forced Tokes to declare in writing that he would no longer "interfere in the internal affairs" of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

In March, two Canadian journalists were expelled from Romania after taping an interview with Tokes. A few days after the expulsion, the leadership of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania ordered Tokes to leave his congregation for one in the small village of Mineu. On April 1, after Tokes penned an open letter calling on his church's leadership to open a dialogue on the systematization program between Romanian churches and the state, the Church announced that he was relieved of his pastoral work, and thereafter ceased paying his salary. Still he continued to minister to his congregation, which so far has steadfastly supported him.

In an interview on Romania's systematization plan, broadcast in Hungary in late July, Tokes explained why he has continued to speak out throughout his ordeal, in spite of the possible punishment. "As a minister, I feel myself responsible for the people, as one of its spiritual leaders," he said. "This responsibility is all the more heavy as most of my fellow-ministers are silent." He regretted that his Church's leadership had not summoned up a voice to answer the systematization plan. After the interview was broadcast, Tokes' telephone line was cut and visitors were prevented from visiting his home.[21]

Later this summer, harassment of Tokes took the form of macabre threats against him and members of his congregation. Tokes described a September 11 telephone call in a recent letter to his Bishop:

> The telephone in the rectory has not been working for the past month and a half; with few exceptions, it works only when threatening calls come in. . . .

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[21]Unpublished translation of "Panorama" television interview with Laszlo Tokes, July 24, 1989.

> The man on the phone cursed and insulted me continuously. . . ."I'm going to get my knife into you, and you won't make it to Sunday." And he continued swearing at me.[22]

The next morning, Erno Ujvarossy, one of Tokes' visibly supportive congregants, disappeared. He had told Tokes of anonymous threats that if he continued his relations with the pastor, he might be forced to take a job in Cernavoda, and his son might be dismissed from his own job. Ujvarossy's corpse was found on September 16 in woods outside Timisoara. It is believed that he was murdered or induced to commit suicide. More recently, Bela Sepsi, the husband of one of the congregation's elders, was framed on charges of illegal possession of foreign currency. During interrogation, he sustained serious injuries to the head, and had to be taken to a hospital intensive care unit.[23]

In early September, Tokes received a letter from Bishop Papp demanding that he vacate his home by September 15. Tokes' Timisoara residence permit expired on October 15. The Bishop initiated an eviction suit in early October, and Tokes countered with a suit of his own. On October 20, authorities ordered Tokes to leave his residence within eight days. Tokes moved into the church building. There, on November 2, four masked men attacked him and his family, leaving him with a head-wound. Police did not intervene to stop the attack.

Without a residence permit, Tokes will be unable to remain legally in Timisoara; without an application by the Reformed Church elders, he will be unable to renew his permit. Thus, the combination of an unsupportive church leadership, rigorous state administrative requirements and officially instigated threats of violence are coming to bear on the outspoken minister.

Unlicensed lay pastors and their congregations are among the believers most vulnerable to pressure from the state. In March, authorities placed 77-year-old Pentecostalist lay pastor Constantin Caraman and his assistant Ion Dinica under house arrest for leading Bible study sessions. Each was subjected to interrogations and repeated house searches for weeks on end. The young Bible study participants likewise were subjected to interrogations. While the interrogations have ended for the present, Caraman has lost his telephone and mail service and cannot see visitors. Dinica has been fired from his job, and risks losing the housing provided to him and his family by his former employer. Furthermore, police informed Dinica that he would be forced to move from Bucharest, since with the loss of his job, he does not have the registration required to live there. The two men reportedly are facing trumped-up charges of embezzlement connected with their congregation's fund of voluntary contributions for the poor.

Lay minister Doru Popa, who was removed from his job at Romania's second largest Baptist church and expelled by the Romanian Baptist Union in October 1987, was readmitted in November 1988 on condition that he not preach "for some time." Popa resumed preaching in December 1988. On April 23, four retired Baptist pastors and a deacon ordained Popa. Following the ordination, the Baptist church in Pincota, Arad Judet, elected Popa pastor, and concluded a contract for his services. (These contracts are common for pastors who have not yet been approved by the Department of Cults.) The Arad Baptist leadership pronounced Popa's ordination void, and sought

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[22]Unpublished letter of Laszlo Tokes, September 13, 1989, translation from the Hungarian prepared by the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation.

[23]Keston College New Release, 19 September 1989; Keston College News Release, 24 October 1989.

to dissuade prospective candidates from being baptized by Popa. Over the course of several days before a planned Baptism of 26 new church members in June, local authorities called in members of the church committee and urged them to dismiss Popa. While police have questioned his employment status, he still remains in his Pincota post.

Dozens of churches have been destroyed in Romania as a result of so-called "zoning violations" or in the urban "modernization" process. Over 25 religiously and culturally significant Orthodox churches have been demolished in Bucharest alone, as well as a number of churches belonging to minority denominations.

The Comanesti Baptist church was demolished on May 31, the day after authorities arrested Pastor Ioan Chivoiu and two elders. It had been the subject of a two-month-long struggle between its congregation and local civil authorities.

Two years earlier, the congregation had received verbal permission from local authorities to convert a house in Comanesti into a church. It completed the necessary alterations and consecrated the building last autumn. In April of this year, local authorities declared that the church had been constructed without permission and would be demolished for that reason. They sealed the building on April 26, but the congregation continued to gather there. Pastor Chivoiu was harassed severely and, in an unprecedented move, the Baptist General Union (the umbrella organization and intermediary between authorities and Romanian Baptist congregations) supported the pastor and his congregation and refused to revoke the church's authorization. On May 31, all the male members of the congregation were detained, and the bulldozers moved in.

Yet even with the destruction of the church, the congregation's travails were not at an end. Four members of the congregation -- Valentin Rusu, Gheorghe Iacobuta, Nicolae Iacob and Mihai Cretu -- remained in detention. (Cretu was released several days later due to ill health.) In August, their trial on charges of constructing the church with illegally acquired materials opened. It closed only in early October, after three hearings, with convictions and sentences of corrective labor combined with virtual house arrest ranging from one year to two years and eight months.

The trial was only the latest step in the authorities' campaign to intimidate and discredit the Comanesti congregation's charismatic, self-taught pastor, Ioan Chivoiu, and convince him to relocate to a distant locale. Chivoiu had received direct threats, such as the Securitate warning that "if we can't persuade you [to leave Bacau], we'll get your congregation to get you out." The Baptist Union has asked Chivoiu to take over a congregation in Pitesti, about three hours by car away from his home in Bacau.

Standoffs between congregations and authorities continue in many localities in Romania. The Romanian Government has yet to allow a large Bucharest Adventist congregation to move into new, permanent quarters after the August 1986 razing of its church. The Oradea Second Baptist Church has not received official permission for renovation and expansion, although its present building is not nearly large enough for its needs. The Pentecostal congregation in Bistrita continues the struggle to save its church, threatened with demolition after church leaders -- having tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to garner official permission -- attempted to expand it without official clearance in July 1987.

The experience of a young Baptist surgeon from Braila illustrates the elaborate web of discrimination and persecution that dogs believers, particularly those in the professions who have not yet reached retirement age. (Reprisals are meted out most efficiently through administrative sanctions on the job.) The authorities fear the example set by religious intellectuals who command respect in their communities and

demonstrate that a religious life is not the scourge described time and time again in the official Romanian press.

The doctor, a Communist Party member, was baptized in March 1987. First, he was threatened with a job transfer if he did not abandon his Baptist faith. Then he experienced two months of calm, during which he began to translate for foreign Baptists visiting Romanian congregations.

In May 1987, the doctor was called to a Communist Party meeting, where he was told he could not practice medicine because it is a "materialist" science. If he continued to work, there might be "problems" with the police, the party activists warned. If, however, he were to recant his religious faith publicly, he would be permitted to emigrate. The doctor was then expelled from the party.

About two weeks after the expulsion, the medical board withdrew his license to perform surgery. The secret police started to follow him, and his telephone was cut. He was transferred to a general practitioner's job in a factory polyclinic outside the city. He likewise lost a supplemental part-time job teaching in a local vocational school for health workers, where he was admonished, "Our children have nothing to learn from you anymore."

The doctor has received threats from Securitate operatives, who point out that "there have been a lot of accidents." They also have reminded him that he has a wife and child, and have threatened to imprison him.

While Romanian authorities depend mostly on administrative sanctions or threats of violence to temper believers' faith and activities, they also fall back often on criminal prosecution. This past spring or summer, five Christians -- Constantin Lungoci, Petrica and Zaharia Morosan, Vasile Chindris and Constantin Cirdei -- were arrested and sentenced to three- to four and one half-year prison sentences for their religious activities.[24]

Freedom of religion in Romania is closely bound to freedom of assembly. Romanian citizens must obtain official permission to organize or assemble; thus by and large believers are not permitted to extend their religious life beyond church walls. Consequently, they cannot engage in social work and other services performed by church ministries elsewhere in the world. Attempts to gather independently for worship by members of officially recognized faiths are treated as "illegal assemblies," with participants sometimes arrested, fined and evicted from their homes. Unrecognized groups are forced underground by laws and extra-legal sanctions against unauthorized assembly.

The Romanian State Department of Cults controls religious affairs in the county. It controls the importation and printing of religious materials (including Bibles), issues licenses to preach, subsidizes clerical salaries, approves permits for church construction or renovation, establishes the number of new admissions to seminaries, and in general ensures the churches' "respect of legality." It exerts pressure on each denomination's official leadership, which has the authority to approve or disapprove the congregations' budgets and the responsibility of keeping the churches below it in line. For example, according to the Hungarian Press of Transylvania, in February 1989, state authorities forced a Cluj Catholic church to cancel services in memory of the late Transylvanian Hungarian Bishop Aron Marton. Representatives from the Department of Cults visited the Hungarian bishops in Cluj and Alba Iulia and threatened to arrest any priest who participated in the planned memorial service.

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[24]"Index Index," Index on Censorship, Vol. 18, No. 8 (September 1989), p. 39.

The Department of Cults is in charge of granting licenses to pastors. It can, moreover, punish errant prelates by withdrawing their licenses. The shortage of Baptist pastors who have completed the seminary training approved by the Department of Cults has created pressure on congregations to engage pastors who have not gone through such formal seminary training. Lack of seminary training is a further, technical excuse for the Department of Cults to refuse to license clergymen whom it deems suspect.

A new decree dating from January 1989, when it was passed by the Grand National Assembly, poses a new threat to congregations led by unlicensed pastors, and places new restrictions in general on the congregations' freedom of maneuver. According to this decree, all churches now must deposit money received from members into a checking account, and they have to pay for their expenses with checks. Shopkeepers, who have received verbal notice of this decree, will not give a receipt (to prove that the purchase was legal) unless they get a check. The bank will not permit churches to write checks without the approval of a "competent authority," presumably the Department of Cults. The decree would endanger especially those pastors working on the basis of personal services contracts with their congregations. They could be accused not only of being unofficial pastors, but also of embezzling funds from the church.

V. THE MINORITIES

A railroad traces the boundary between Moldavia and Transylvania at the entrance to Harghita County. As a train approaches somewhere in the distance, a wooden boom is lowered, and the thin stream of westward-bound vehicles snaking around the curves of the two-lane road comes to a brisk halt. Drivers climb out of their cars and stretch their legs. They look up and down the still-empty tracks with impatience. An ethnic Hungarian trucker leans out of his cab, looks over his shoulder, then suggests to a passerby sardonically, "This is the border crossing, you know. Let's make a run for it."

The shadow of the continuing exodus of refugees from Romania to Hungary hangs especially heavily over the minority populations. "This is the end of the Hungarians in Transylvania," whispers one elderly woman in a predominantly Hungarian town. While proportionally more ethnic Romanians are fleeing to Hungary this year than last, the overwhelming majority of refugees arriving in Hungary still are ethnic Hungarians. The refugees consistently cite worsening economic conditions, growing lawlessness and a complete loss of hope for the future as reasons for making the break with their homeland. They also complain of discrimination in employment and education, and the Romanian authorities' unceasing attempts to assimilate the minorities into the wider Romanian culture.

Several instances of police brutality resulting in the deaths of ethnic Hungarians over the past year have heightened the sense of fear gripping minority communities and causing their legal and illegal emigration rates to rise. In January, Andras Keresztes of Tirgu Secuiesc reportedly hanged himself after repeated police interrogations and beatings aimed to force him to implicate Hungarians from his community in the theft of wood from a forest.[25] In May, Securitate agents beat truck-driver Janos Tamas to death after discovering that he had obtained veal to celebrate the Communion of his two children. In June, Imre Tamas was beaten to death in a village police station near Cluj after he refused to speak Romanian when ordering a beer.[26]

On top of the severe economic hardship, indignities and arbitary treatment suffered by virtually all Romanian citizens, the members of Romania's national minorities face diminishing opportunities to be educated in their own language and maintain a culture separate from Romanian culture. Family and cultural contacts across the Romanian-Hungarian border have been hampered for some years -- although the flow has not been cut off -- and Hungarian visitors to Transylvania are harassed routinely. As a rule, at least until the present time, ethnic Germans under retirement age have been permitted only to visit the German Democratic Republic; only those of retirement age or older are allowed to travel to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Official control over Romanian citizens' freedom of movement has resulted in minority members being transferred -- through job layoffs and reassignments, for example -- to predominantly Romanian areas, while Romanians are placed in what once were homogeneous minority areas. While this assimilation policy has been in effect for several decades, minority representatives note that it has accelerated in the 1980s. In effect, the cities of Brasov, Cluj and Tirgu Mures have been closed to in-migration by Hungarians. Transylvanian Hungarians have testified that Romanians

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[25]Hungarian Press of Translyvania, Release No. 16/1989 (March 5, 1989).

[26]"Bavure en Transylvanie," La Nouvelle Alternative, No. 15 (September 1989), p. 60.

receive positive incentives to move into such cities -- 15,000 lei and guaranteed housing -- while Hungarians get no such incentives.

Moreover, according to some ethnic Hungarian residents, Hungarian students have been required to pass very competitive examinations in order to be assigned a job in the same area where their families live. The Budapest-based Hungarian Press of Transylvania recently reported that transfers are occurring even before minority members reach working age. Beginning in the 1988-89 school year, it reported, more than 4,500 Hungarian students from three Transylvanian counties were forced to attend schools outside Transylvania, and are expected to be required to sign five-year labor contracts with enterprises outside of Transylvania.

As a result of these administrative strictures, institutions which once had a mandate to provide cultural, educational and other services to minority communities are being watered down, with more and more Romanians moving into them and, ultimately, their functions shifting to serve an ethnic Romanian population. Romanian administrators have come to dominate once heavily Hungarian institutions such as the Medical and Pharmacological Institute in Tirgu Mures. Minority-language theaters, newspapers and publishing houses have been shut down or merged with Romanian-language ones. The work of the "Kriterion" publishing house, with responsibility for publishing in the minority languages of Romania, has come to a virtual standstill. Hungarians charge that those minority-language institutions that have survived are subject to sharper budget cuts than their Romanian counterparts.

The minorities' struggle to maintain their identities has moved increasingly into the religious sphere, for many the last bastion of minority culture. Hungarian Catholic prelates and believers are struggling in some localities such as increasingly mixed Tirgu Mures to maintain Hungarian-language worship services. A source in the Hungarian Catholic Church in Budapest testified that in towns where more than 20 Romanians live, at least one service must be conducted in Romanian each Sunday. No similar requirement is known to exist to meet the needs of Hungarians or Germans attending Romanian-language Catholic churches. Hungarian Catholics in Romania fear that the Hungarian Catholic Bishop of Alba Iulia will be replaced by an ethnic Romanian prelate or placed in a subordinate position vis-a-vis Ioan Robu, the Romanian Catholic Apostolic Administrator in Bucharest. The Hungarian Reformed Church has no Romanian-language congregants, and consequently no pressure to conduct services in Romanian. Yet because of its potential role as a guardian of Hungarian culture, authorities have subjected its pastors and members to increasing pressures, as illustrated by the Tokes case discussed in the "Believers" chapter.

Strict ceilings cap the number of minority students permitted to enroll in universities that once served their ethnic communities, such as the one-time Hungarian university in Cluj. By law, a minimum of 26 students is necessary to form an elementary school class being taught in the minority language, while 36 are required for such a class in secondary school. But because of Romania's official assimilation policies, teachers proficient in minority languages are in short supply in the areas where the minorities are concentrated. The Hungarian Press of Transylvania reported that the seven Hungarian-language high school classes remaining in the town of Covasna during the 1988-1989 school year had been reduced to one for the present school year.[27] Refugees from Valea lui Mihaly (Ermihalyfalva in Hungarian), a town directly east of Debrecen, Hungary, testified that despite the town's large Hungarian population there was no Hungarian-language schooling.

Because the Government assigns graduates places of work and residence, Hungarian- and German-speaking teachers often find themselves teaching in

[27]Hungarian Press of Transylvania Release 56/1989 (July 5, 1989).

overwhelmingly Romanian areas, where Romanian is the language of teaching. Between 1984 and 1987, reportedly half of the ethnic Hungarian school principals were replaced with ethnic Romanians. German communities have had comparatively more success in maintaining native-language schooling than have Hungarian communities.

As relations between Romania and Hungary have deteriorated, an anti-Hungarian press campaign has heightened the ethnic Hungarians' sense of being beseiged in Romania. They fear that the rural systematization program will further accelerate their assimilation from a culture of "cohabiting nationalities" to a purely Romanian culture, and erase the Hungarian cultural patrimony that existed in Romania.

A 1977 agreement between Romania and Hungary provides for Hungarian-language publications to be imported into Romania. Reportedly, this flow has virtually ceased. Moreover, copies of the Hungarian party newspaper Nepszabadsag are reportedly harder to find in Romania than other East European party papers -- although this may be in part due to its reform-oriented content as well as to its popularity among the Hungarian minority. Hungarians report that subscription periodicals and books sent from Hungary do not arrive in Romania; border officials confiscate Hungarian-language publications.

The number of Hungarian-language publications overall has declined over the past 10 to 15 years, and those that have survived are, like their Romanian counterparts, instruments of the regime's propaganda campaign. Because part of that campaign is to reflect a virulent Romanian nationalism, it is particularly offensive to minorities. That campaign is reflected in such small but significant directives as that of January 1988 decreeing that henceforth minority-language publications, like their Romanian counterparts, must use the Romanian names for towns instead of the minority-language names.

Thus minority-language education, publishing, cultural institutions and human contacts are being whittled away steadily. No one is willing to wager on whether a post-Ceausescu leadership will shift minorities policies to a more tolerant plane. In any case, for the present, Romania's once-rich minority legacy continues to shrink.

VI. HUMAN CONTACTS

Romania's growing international isolation is mirrored in its human contacts policies. From emigration to postal correspondence, authorities maintain a tight grip over Romanian citizens' relations with the world outside the country. As poet Mircea Dinescu pointed out, "If you think about the fact that a letter sent from Paris takes 45 days to reach its destination in Bucharest (if it arrives at all, and only after being read by someone else), then you can see why we wonder if we're still a part of Europe."[28]

Romania's record on reuniting divided families and permitting family visits, binational marriages and emigration is poor. While the numbers of emigrants have risen in recent months, some cases still are held up inexplicably for years.

The Vienna Concluding Document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed in January of this year, required the participating States to resolve all cases outstanding at the end of the Vienna Meeting within six months. Yet over 2,000 Romanians who are qualified to emigrate to the United States have been waiting for more than six months -- and some for several years -- for Romanian emigration passports.

ROMANIAN EMIGRATION TO THE USA

1987	
January	82
February	97
March	130
April	200
May	291
June	304
July	248
August	244
September	336
October	256
November	249
December	233
TOTAL	2,670

1988	
January	124
February	89
March	119
April	137
May	91
June	145
July	127
August	196
September	254
October	324
November	275
December	204
TOTAL	2,085

[28]Dinescu, op. cit., p. 33.

1989 (January-October)	
January	218
February	182
March	238
April	316
May	196
June	173
July	258
August	400
September	333
October	419
TOTAL	2,733

Prospective emigrants are obliged in many cases to relinquish jobs, housing, schooling for their children, medical care and social services while being forced to wait many months, if not years, for their passport applications to be approved and exit documents issued.

Romania has a poor record of expediting approval of binational marriage cases. Of 77 pending marriage cases (63 involving U.S. citizens), 50 have been awaiting approval for over six months. One case is four years old. The number of temporary visits by Romanians to U.S. relatives has declined since 1988. Four applications by U.S. parents to adopt Romanian children, initiated in 1986 and 1987, remain unapproved.

Many prospective emigrants resort to desperate means to leave the country. Refugees continue to flood across Romania's borders with Hungary and Yugoslavia. Such vast numbers have attempted to escape that some Romanians who have attempted to cross the border and been caught have been told that the jails were already full of would-be border-crossers. Thus, many are sentenced to labor at reduced wages combined with virtual house arrest.

In early October, Hungary's Interior Minister Zoltan Gal testified to the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees that 21,000 people had illegally crossed the border from Romania into Hungary since mid-1987. In the month of September alone, 2,600 Romanians sought asylum in Hungary. While the majority of refugees are members of the ethnic Hungarian minority, a growing proportion are ethnic Romanians. Thus, approximately one-third of the September arrivals were ethnic Romanians.[29]

Thousands of other Romanian citizens seek to emigrate legally, but they find that the simple act of applying to emigrate -- or even voicing their desire to do so -- can have serious repercussions. Despite a 1985 agreement between Romanian and American diplomatic representatives, according to which Romanian would-be emigrants would not be stripped of their jobs, housing, and a range of social benefits, authorities continue to punish those who seek to leave. Prospective emigrants often still find themselves demoted in their jobs, driven from their houses, and unable to obtain medical and other services. On top of the severe economic conditions faced by all Romanian citizens, the would-be emigrants are in truly desperate circumstances.

One recent case involving a Romanian family that applied for emigration in 1983 illustrates the harassment authorities mete out to discourage would-be emigrants. As a result of applying to emigrate, the father was forced for what he says were specious medical reasons to retire and the family was moved from its lodgings, which

[29]Radio Free Europe Weekly Record of Events, 28 September - 4 October 1989.

were restored only after a medical intervention was made on behalf of his son. The father was detained in spring 1989, threatened with beatings and a trumped-up criminal accusation if he, his wife and son did not sign a document stating that they were not interested in employment. The family refused to sign, hoping no doubt to be able to exercise its "right" to work.

In July, officials announced a new State Council decree on "guarding . . . state frontiers" of Romania. While the decree sets out already-existing provisions from two earlier decrees, it also provides for additional "engineering works," such as the fences rumored to have been erected along Romania's border with Hungary, and signalling devices. It extends the 500-meter area along the borders in which grazing, construction work and cultivating tall plants cannot be performed to a full kilometer-wide zone. Finally, it strengthens existing regulations on border guards' use of firearms, while pointing out that "shooting to kill offenders or other people should be prevented."

Not only citizens seeking to flee the country but also tourists frequently encounter mistreatment by Romanian border guards. On September 12, 1989, 30 Polish tourists were reported to have been beaten with rifle butts and teargassed after Romanian border guards seized their passports and forced them off a train entering Romania from Hungary.[30] This incident, which the Polish Government formally protested, provided further evidence of Romania's willful isolation from East as well as West.

[30]"Polish Tourists Report Beating by Romanian Border Troops," AP Newswire, September 14, 1989.

VII. POSTSCRIPT

Against the background of a dynamic Eastern Europe pulsing with change, the Fourteenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party had all the rhythm of a stale ritual from a faraway land where time stands still. The Congress, which took place November 21 through 24, was painstakingly choreographed and utterly predictable. The time-worn slogans, prescribed cheers and election of Nicolae Ceausescu to a further five-year term at the head of the party all came through according to plan. A Western-led diplomatic boycott of the celebrations was judiciously ignored, as were the attempts of several Western journalists to travel to Romania to report on the Congress.

Ceausescu used the occasion of the Congress to reiterate his firm stand against reform, and to criticize those countries that have chosen to move away from Communism. He put forward a proposal to hold an international conference of Communist parties "for a joint discussion of problems facing the entire communist and workers' movement," although his heavy and often defensive emphasis on independence and sovereignty suggested that in all spheres except the nurturing of world Communism he intended to maintain Romania's isolationist stance. Taking aim at both the Soviet Union and the United States, Ceausescu cautioned, "Mankind must be aware today of a possible new accord between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the detriment of other peoples." He called, moreover, for "the condemnation and cancellation of all the accords concluded with Hitler's Germany, practical conclusions being drawn to eliminate all the consequences of those accords and dictates." One of those consequences was the Soviet incorporation of Bessarabia, a Romanian territory now known as Soviet Moldavia.

The Congress was noteworthy for the theme that remained unstated but still sadly obvious: despite Romania's repayment of the great bulk of its external debt, the Government would not redirect resources to the needs of the people. With a defiant declaration that "the country under the leadership of the party is determined to continue down the revolutionary path we have taken," Ceausescu staked out his lonely place in the camp that every other Old Guard East European Communist leader has been forced to abandon.